



Milwaukee County

Board of Supervisors

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COUNTY BOARD PROTECTS MENTAL HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE COUNTY RESIDENTS

Youth programs prevent young people from requiring costly juvenile corrections

Milwaukee, WI – The Milwaukee County Board made the preservation of mental health care and human services top priorities in the 2009 Budget adopted last week, and will continue to do so when considering the County Executive’s budget vetoes tomorrow afternoon. Supervisor Peggy A. West, Chair of the County Board’s Health & Human Needs Committee, said, “Many of these services are core Milwaukee County functions that provide assistance to those who need the help most. We cannot turn our backs on them.”

Last week, a majority of Supervisors voted to deny outsourcing a portion of the **Economic Support Division’s Call Center** functions to the Impact 211 line and UW-Milwaukee. Only 56 percent of Call Center positions were filled in 2008, resulting in an average wait of 42.5 minutes before speaking with a caseworker. As a result, Supervisors also voted to add five more specialists to the Call Center.

“I will vote to override the County Executive’s veto of this issue. Impact 211 does great work in our community, but their representatives are not specifically trained in economic support operations,” said Supervisor Toni M. Clark, Chairperson of the County Board’s Economic and Community Development Committee. “We want to make sure that callers talk to actual specialists, rather than an answering service. That’s why we chose to add more of our own caseworkers.”

The Board was united in providing \$100,000 for the **Safe Alternatives for Youth (SAY)** program. Since its inception, the SAY program has awarded more than 80 mini-grants for one-time educational, cultural and recreational activities for disadvantaged youth. These funds were leveraged to get additional matching grants from other segments of the community. A provision sponsored by Supervisor Elizabeth M. Coggins to include \$150,000 for a **Summer Youth Employment Program** was also included in the budget, contingent on Milwaukee Public Schools providing a match for the funds, but was vetoed by the County Executive.

“These positive experiences help young people learn how to choose the right path and stay out of trouble,” said Board Chairman Lee Holloway, who spearheaded the program in 2003. “We need these important programs to help children grow up and become productive members of our society, rather than ending up in the juvenile correctional system, which is costly for Milwaukee County taxpayers.”

Supervisors also approved \$50,000 for **Career Youth Development’s Victory Over Violence Grief Counseling and Survivor Center Initiative**. These funds will help support violence prevention in Milwaukee County and the Survivor of Homicide Group.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Board’s decision to add a new capital improvement project for the construction of a new **Behavioral Health Division facility** demonstrates a commitment to modernize the delivery of mental health services in Milwaukee County. The County Executive vetoed the project.

“There are some major deficiencies that affect the quality of care at the current Mental Health Complex,” said Supervisor Lynne De Bruin, who sponsored the capital improvement amendment to replace the facility. “A new mental health facility is necessary to modernize the delivery of services to individuals in our community that have severe mental illness.”

Supervisors voted to restore positions that had been cut from the Behavioral Health Division’s **Targeted Case Management unit**, which provides services to approximately 244 clients. The Board also voted unanimously to deny the abolishment of two full-time Registered Nurse positions at the Behavioral Health Division.

Supervisors voted to provide \$1 million for the **Special Needs Housing Program**, financed with a loan from the State Trust Fund Loan Program. The funds are budgeted for the construction or rehabilitation of housing to serve clients of the Behavioral Health Division who suffer from mental illness and/or substance abuse.

The County Board will consider vetoes from the County Executive on Wednesday, November 19th at 1:30 p.m. in Room 200 of the Milwaukee County Courthouse. A two-thirds majority (13 of 19 votes) is required to override.

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